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Mayor Liccardo Calls for End to PG&E's Discretionary Control Over Power Blackouts and State Oversight to Mitigate Public Safety Risks

Mayor Liccardo: "We cannot trust PG&E to make decisions in the best interest of public safety."

San Jose, Calif. – In an [op-ed published in the San Francisco Chronicle](#), San José Mayor Sam Liccardo is calling for oversight of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) new authority to cut power regionally if the Utility decides that weather conditions increase wildfire risk. This authority comes after a recent California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) decision gives California's investor-owned utilities full discretion to shut down their transmission and distribution lines – without sufficient notice to local governments and emergency responders.

Mayor Liccardo is calling on State lawmakers to take responsibility for grid safety out of PG&E's hands, and into those of a public agency such as the California Independent System Operator or the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

"The responsibility for making this very weighty decision to cut our region's power cannot lie solely in the hands of PG&E--we need a decision maker accountable to the public, not merely to shareholders," said Mayor Liccardo. "We cannot trust PG&E to make decisions in the best interest of public safety. This is the same PG&E that announced \$11 million in bonuses to executives in the same year they filed for bankruptcy, falsified electric and gas infrastructure records for a half-decade, and issued debt to pay more than \$7 billion in dividends to shareholders, all while cutting needed investment in infrastructure safety and maintenance."

With this new authority, PG&E submitted a public safety power shutoff (PSPS) plan to the PUC that will vastly broaden the geographic area subject to power shutdowns, expanding the circuit miles of targeted transmission lines from 370 miles last year to 5,500 miles today. The plan also reduces the threshold of de-energization decisions, guaranteeing blackouts will happen more frequently and last five or seven days. While companies like PG&E must coordinate transmission shut-offs with state and federal regulatory agencies, the companies retain full authority to decide whether and when to flip the switch and notice to emergency responders, and local governments may come without sufficient notice. Without

oversight or sufficient notice to local agencies, these extended power outages could pose intolerable public safety risks, including:

- Loss of air-conditioning during the summer heat
- Unreliable cell phone service that could prevent residents from calling 911
- Senior care homes' without backup generators inability to operate respirators and other life-sustaining equipment
- Loss of power to traffic signals and street lights, which would increase accident risk and gridlock
- Wells and gas station pumps lacking backup generators would cease operating, leaving rural residents without water and urban commuters without gasoline.

In addition to severe public safety risks, extended blackouts are certain to lead to major economic losses:

“Every supermarket, restaurant, and home will lose refrigerated food, offices will shut down, struggling small businesses will fail, and many families will flee their homes,” continued Mayor Liccardo. “This isn’t speculation: multi-day blackouts in 2003 cost Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York residents and businesses more than \$4 billion, and resulted in 100 fatalities.”

To prepare for extended power outages, the City of San José has formed a task force with the Office of Emergency Management, Community Energy Department, the San José Fire Department, Public Works, and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services to prepare for outages, and assess and plan City response.

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